

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Matthew

We have now before us,

I. The New Testament of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ; so this second part of the holy Bible is entitled: The new covenant; so it might as well be rendered; the word signifies both. But, when it is (as here) spoken of as Christ's act and deed, it is most properly rendered a testament, for he is the testator, and it becomes of force by his death Heb 9:16-17; nor is there, as in covenants, a previous treaty between the parties, but what is granted, though an estate upon condition, is owing to the will, the free-will, the good-will, of the Testator. All the grace contained in this book is owing to Jesus Christ as our Lord and Saviour; and, unless we consent to him as our Lord, we cannot expect any benefit by him as our Saviour. This is called a new testament, to distinguish it from that which was given by Moses, and was not antiquated; and to signify that it should be always new, and should never wax old, and grow out of date.

These books contain, not only a full discovery of that grace which has appeared to all men, bringing salvation, but a legal instrument by which it is conveyed to, and settled upon, all believers. How carefully do we preserve, and with what attention and pleasure do we read, the last will and testament of a friend, who has therein left us a fair estate, and, with it, high expressions of his love to us! How precious then should this testament of our blessed Saviour be to us, which secures to us all his unsearchable riches! It is his testament; for though, as is usual, it was written by others (we have nothing upon record that was of Christ's own writing), yet he dictated it; and the night before he died, in the institution of his supper, he signed, sealed, and published it, in the presence of twelve witnesses. For, though these books were not written for some years after, for the benefit of posterity, in perpetuum rei memoriam-- as a perpetual memorial, yet the New Testament of our Lord Jesus was settled, confirmed, and declared, from the time of his death, as a nuncupative will, with which these records exactly agree. The things which St. Luke wrote were things which were most surely believed, and therefore well known, before he wrote them; but, when they were written, the oral tradition was superseded and set aside, and these writings were the repository of that New Testament. This is intimated by the title which is prefixed to many Greek Copies, *Tes kaines Diathekes Hapanta*-- The whole of the New Testament, or all the things of it. In it is declared the whole counsel of God concerning our salvation, Acts 20:27. As the law of the Lord is perfect, so is the gospel of Christ, and nothing is to be added to it. We have it all, and are to look for no more.

II. We have before us The Four Gospels. Gospel signifies good news, or glad tidings; and this history of Christ's coming into the world to save sinners is, without doubt, the best news that ever came from heaven to earth; the angel gave it this title Luke 2:10, *Euangelizomai hymin*(NT:2097;NT:5215)-- I bring you good tidings; I bring the gospel to you. And the prophet foretold it, Isa 52:7; 61:1. It is there foretold that in the days of the messiah good tidings should be preached. Gospel is an old Saxon word; it is God's spell or word; and God is so called because he is good, *Deus optimus*-- God most excellent, and therefore it may be a good spell, or word. If we take spell in its more proper signification for a charm (*carmen*), and take that in a good sense, for what is moving and affecting, which is apt lenire dolorem-- to calm the spirits, or to raise

them in admiration or love, as that which is very amiable we call charming, it is applicable to the gospel; for in it the charmer charmeth wisely, though to deaf adders, Ps 58:4-5.

Nor (one would think) can any charms be so powerful as those of the beauty and love of our Redeemer. The whole New Testament is the gospel. St. Paul calls it his gospel, because he was one of the preachers of it. Oh that we may each of us make it ours by our cordial acceptance of it and subjection to it! But the four books which contain the history of the Redeemer we commonly call the four gospels, and the inspired penmen of them evangelists, or gospel-writers; not, however, very properly, because that title belongs to a particular order of ministers, that were assistants to the apostles Eph 4:11: He gave some apostles, and some evangelists. It was requisite that the doctrine of Christ should be interwoven with, and founded upon, the narrative of his birth, life, miracles, death, and resurrection; for then it appears in its clearest and strongest light. As in nature, so in grace, the most happy discoveries are those which take rise from the certain representations of matters of fact.

Natural history is the best philosophy; and so is the sacred history, both of the Old and New Testament, the most proper and grateful vehicle of sacred truth. These four gospels were early and constantly received by the primitive church, and read in Christian assemblies, as appears by the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus, who lived little more than a hundred years after the ascension of Christ; they declared that neither more nor fewer than four were received by the church. A Harmony of these four evangelists was compiled by Tatian about that time, which he called, *To dia tessaron*-- The Gospel out of the four. In the third and fourth centuries there were gospels forged by divers sects, and published, one under the name of St. Peter, another of St. Thomas, another of St. Philip, etc. But they were never owned by the church, nor was any credit given to them, as the learned Dr. Whitby shows. And he gives this good reason why we should adhere to these written records, because, whatever the pretences of tradition may be, it is not sufficient to preserve things with any certainty, as appears by experience. For, whereas Christ said and did many memorable things, which were not written John 20:30; 21:25, tradition has not preserved any one of them to us, but all is lost except what was written; that therefore is what we must abide by; and blessed by God that we have it to abide by; it is the sure word of history.

III. We have before us the Gospel according to St. Matthew. The penman was by birth a Jew, by calling a publican, till Christ commanded his attendance, and then he left the receipt of custom, to follow him, and was one of those that accompanied him all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out, beginning from the baptism of John unto the day that he was taken up, Acts 1:21-22. He was therefore a competent witness of what he has here recorded. He is said to have written this history about eight years after Christ's ascension. Many of the ancients say that he wrote it in the Hebrew or Syriac language; but the tradition is sufficiently disproved by Dr. Whitby. Doubtless, it was written in Greek, as the other parts of the New Testament were; not in that language which was peculiar to the Jews, whose church and state were near a period, but in that which was common to the world, and in which the knowledge of Christ would be most effectually transmitted to the nations of the earth; yet it is probable that there might be an edition of it in Hebrew, published by St. Matthew himself, at the same time that he wrote it in Greek; the former for the Jews, the latter for the Gentiles, when he left Judea, to preach among the Gentiles. Let us bless God that we have it, and have it in a language we understand.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Mark

We have heard the evidence given in by the first witness to the doctrine and miracles of our Lord Jesus; and now here is another witness produced, who calls for our attention. The second living creature saith, Come, and see, Rev 6:3. Now let us enquire a little,

I. Concerning this witness. His name is Mark. Marcus was a Roman name, and a very common one, and yet we have no reason to think, but that he was by birth a Jew; but as Saul, when he went among the nations, took the Roman name of Paul, so he of Mark, his Jewish name perhaps being Mardocai; so Grotius. We read of John whose surname was Mark, sister's son to Barnabas, whom Paul was displeas'd with Acts 15:37-38, but afterward had a great kindness for, and not only order'd the churches to receive him Col 4:10, but sent for him to be his assistant, with this encomium, He is profitable to me for the ministry 2 Tim 4:11; and he reckons him among his fellow-laborers, Philem 24. We read of Marcus whom Peter calls his son, he having been an instrument of his conversion 1 Peter 5:13; whether that was the same with the other, and, if not, which of them was the penman of this gospel, is altogether uncertain.

It is a tradition very current among the ancients, that St. Mark wrote this gospel under the direction of St. Peter, and that it was confirm'd by his authority; so Hieron. Catal. Script. Eccles. Marcus discipulus et interpres Petri, juxta quod Petrum referentem audierat, legatus Roma ... fratribus, breve scripsit evangelium-- Mark, the disciple and interpreter of Peter, being sent from Rome by the brethren, wrote a concise gospel; and Tertullian saith (Adv. Marcion. lib. 4, cap. 5), Marcus quod edidit, Petri affirmetur, cujus interpres Marcus-- Mark, the interpreter of Peter, deliver'd in writing the things which had been preach'd by Peter. But as Dr. Whitby very well suggests, Why should we have recourse to the authority of Peter for the support of this gospel, or say with St. Jerome that Peter approv'd of it and recommend'd it by his authority to the church to be read, when, though it is true Mark was no apostle, yet we have all the reason in the world to think that both he and Luke were of the number of the seventy disciples, who companied with the apostles all along Acts 1:21, who had a commission like that of the apostles (Luke 10:19, compar'd with Mark 16:18), and who, it is highly probable, receiv'd the Holy Ghost when they did Acts 1:15; 2:1-4, so that it is no diminution at all to the validity or value of this gospel, that Mark was not one of the twelve, as Matthew and John were? St. Jerome saith that, after the writing of this gospel, he went into Egypt, and was the first that preach'd the gospel at Alexandria, where he found'd a church, to which he was a great example of holy living. Constituit ecclesiam tantf doctrinf et vitae continentif ut omnes sectatores Christi ad exemplum sui cogeret-- He so adorn'd, by his doctrine and his life, the church which he found'd, that his example influenc'd all the followers of Christ.

II. Concerning this testimony. Mark's gospel,

1. Is but short, much shorter than Matthew's, not giving so full an account of Christ's sermons as that did, but insisting chiefly on his miracles.
2. It is very much a repetition of what we had in Matthew; many remarkable circumstances being added to the stories there related, but not many new matters. When many witnesses are called to prove the same fact, upon which a judgment is to be given, it is not thought tedious, but highly necessary, that they should each of them relate it in their own words, again and again, that by the agreement of the testimony the thing may be established; and therefore we must not think this book of scripture needless, for it is written not only to confirm our belief that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God, but to put us in mind of things which we have read in the foregoing gospel, that we may give the more earnest heed to them, lest at any time we let them slip; and even pure minds have need to be thus stirred up by way of remembrance. It was fit that such great things as these should be spoken and written, once, yea twice, because man is so unapt to perceive them, and so apt to forget them. There is no ground for the tradition, that this gospel was written first in Latin, though it was written at Rome; it was written in Greek, as was St. Paul's epistle to the Romans, the Greek being the more universal language.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Luke

We are now entering into the labours of another evangelist; his name Luke, which some take to be a contraction of Lucilius; born at Antioch, so St. Jerome. Some think that he was the only one of all the penmen of the scripture that was not of the seed of Israel. He was a Jewish proselyte, and, as some conjecture, converted to Christianity by the ministry of St. Paul at Antioch; and after his coming into Macedonia Acts 16:10 he was his constant companion. He had employed himself in the study and practice of physic; hence, Paul calls him Luke the beloved Physician, Col 4:14. Some of the pretended ancients tell you that he was a painter, and drew a picture of the virgin Mary. But Dr. Whitby thinks that there is nothing certain to the contrary, and that therefore it is probable that he was one of the seventy disciples, and a follower of Christ when he was here upon earth; and, if so, he was a native Israelite.

I see not what can be objected against this, except some uncertain traditions of the ancients, which we can build nothing upon, and against which may be opposed the testimonies of Origen and Epiphanius, who both say that he was one of the seventy disciples. He is supposed to have written this gospel when he was associated with St. Paul in his travels, and by direction from him: and some think that this is the brother whom Paul speaks of 2 Cor 8:18, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches of Christ; as if the meaning of it were, that he was celebrated in all the churches for writing this gospel; and that St. Paul means this when he speaks sometimes of his gospel, as Rom 2:16. But there is no ground at all for this. Dr. Cave observes that his way and manner of writing are accurate and exact, his style polite and elegant, sublime and lofty, yet perspicuous; and that he expresses himself in a vein of purer Greek than is to be found in the other writers of the holy story.

Thus he relates divers things more copiously than the other evangelists; and thus he especially treats of those things which relate to the priestly office of Christ. It is uncertain when, or about what time, this gospel was written. Some think that it was written in Achaia, during his travels with Paul, seventeen years (twenty-two years, say others) after Christ's ascension; others, that it was written at Rome, a little before he wrote his history of the Acts of the Apostles (which is a continuation of this), when he was there with Paul, while he was a prisoner, and preaching in his own hired house, with which the history of the Acts concludes; and then Paul saith that only Luke was with him, 2 Tim 4:11. When he was under that voluntary confinement with Paul, he had leisure to compile these two histories (and many excellent writings the church has been indebted to a prison for): if so, it was written about twenty-seven years after Christ's ascension, and about the fourth year of Nero. Jerome says, He died when he was eighty-four years of age, and was never married. Some write that he suffered martyrdom; but, if he did, where and when is uncertain. Nor indeed is there much more credit to be given to the Christian traditions concerning the writers of the New Testament than to the Jewish traditions concerning those of the Old Testament.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

John

It is not material to enquire when and where this gospel was written; we are sure that it was given by inspiration of God to John, the brother of James, one of the twelve apostles, distinguished by the honourable character of that disciple whom Jesus loved, one of the first three of the worthies of the Son of David, whom he took to be the witnesses of his retirements, particularly of his transfiguration and his agony. The ancients tell us that John lived longest of all the twelve apostles, and was the only one of them that died a natural death, all the rest suffering martyrdom; and some of them say that he wrote this gospel at Ephesus, at the request of the ministers of the several churches of Asia, in opposition to the heresy of Corinthus and the Ebionites, who held that our Lord was a mere man. It seems most probable that he wrote it before his banishment into the isle of Patmos, for there he wrote his Apocalypse,(NT:602) the close of which seems designed for the closing up of the canon of scripture; and, if so, this gospel was not written after. I cannot therefore give credit to those later fathers, who say that he wrote it in his banishment, or after his return from it, many years after the destruction of Jerusalem; when he was ninety years old, saith one of them; when he was a hundred, saith another of them. However, it is clear that he wrote last of the four evangelists, and, comparing his gospel with theirs, we may observe,

1. That he relates what they had omitted; he brings up the rear, and his gospel is as the rearward or gathering host; it gleans up what they has passed by. Thus there was a later collection of Solomon's wise sayings Prov 25:1, and yet far short of what he delivered, 1 Kings 4:32.
2. That he gives us more of the mystery of that of which the other evangelists gave us only the history. It was necessary that the matters of fact should be first settled, which was done in their declarations of those things which Jesus began both to do and teach, Luke 1:1; Acts 1:1. But, this being done out of the mouth of two or three witnesses, John goes on to perfection Heb 6:1, not laying again the foundation, but building upon it, leading us more within the veil. Some of the ancients observe that the other evangelists wrote more of the *somatika*(NT:4984)-- the bodily things of Christ; but John writes of the *pneumatika*(NT:4152)-- the spiritual things of the gospel, the life and soul of it; therefore some have called this gospel the key of the evangelists. Here is it that a door is opened in heaven, and the first voice we hear is, Come up hither, come up higher. Some of the ancients, that supposed the four living creatures in John's vision to represent the for evangelists, make John himself to be the flying eagle, so high does he soar, and so clearly does he see into divine and heavenly things.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Acts

We have with an abundant satisfaction seen the foundation of our holy religion laid in the history of our blessed Saviour, its great author, which was related and left upon record by four several inspired writers, who all agree in this sacred truth, and the incontestable proofs of it, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. Upon this rock the Christian church is built. How it began to be built upon this rock comes next to be related in this book which we have now before us, and of this we have the testimony only of one witness; for the matters of fact concerning Christ were much more necessary to be fully related and attested than those concerning the apostles. Had Infinite Wisdom seen fit, we might have had as many books of the Acts of the Apostles as we have gospels, nay, as we might have had gospels: but, for fear of over-burdening the world John 21:25, we have sufficient to answer the end, if we will but make use of it. The history of this book (which was always received as a part of the sacred canon) may be considered.

I. As looking back to the preceding gospels, giving light to them, and greatly assisting our faith in them. The promises there made we here find made good, particularly the great promises of the descent of the Holy Ghost, and his wonderful operations, both on the apostles (whom here in a few days we find quite other men than what the gospels left them; no longer weak-headed and weak-hearted, but able to say that which then they were not able to bear John 16:12 as bold as lions to face those hardships at the thought of which they then trembled as lambs), and also with the apostles, making the word mighty to the pulling down of Satan's strong holds, which had been before comparatively preached in vain. The commission there granted to the apostles we here find executed, and the powers there lodged in them we here find exerted in miracles wrought on the bodies of people-- miracles of mercy, restoring sick bodies to health and dead bodies to life-- miracles of judgment, striking rebels blind or dead; and much greater miracles wrought on the minds of people, in conferring spiritual gifts upon them, both of understanding and utterance; and this in pursuance of Christ's purposes, and in performance of his promises, which we had in the gospels.

The proofs of Christ's resurrection with which the gospels closed are here abundantly corroborated, not only by the constant and undaunted testimony of those that conversed with him after he arose (who had all deserted him, and one of them denied him, and would not otherwise have been rallied again but by his resurrection, but must have been irretrievably dispersed, and yet by that were enabled to own him more resolutely than ever, in defiance of bonds and deaths), but by the working of the Spirit with that testimony for the conversion of multitudes to the faith of Christ, according to the word of Christ, that his resurrection, the sign of the prophet Jonas, which was reserved to the last, should be the most convincing proof of his divine mission. Christ had told his disciples that they should be his witnesses, and this book brings them in witnessing for him,-- that they should be fishers of men, and here we have them enclosing multitudes in the gospel-net,-- that they should be the lights of the world, and here we have the world enlightened by them; but that day-spring from on high the first appearing of which we there discerned we here find shining more and more. The corn of wheat, which there fell to the ground, here springs up and bears much fruit; the grain of mustard-seed there is here a great tree; and the kingdom of

heaven, which was then at hand, is here set up. Christ's predictions of the virulent persecutions which the preachers of the gospel should be afflicted with (though one could not have imagined that a doctrine so well worthy of all acceptance should meet with so much opposition) we here find abundantly fulfilled, and also the assurances he gave them of extraordinary supports and comforts under their sufferings. Thus, as the latter part of the history of the Old Testament verifies the promises made to the fathers of the former part (as appears by that famous and solemn acknowledgment of Solomon's, which runs like a receipt in full, 1 Kings 8:56, There has not failed one word of all his good promises which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant), so this latter part of the history of the New Testament exactly answers to the world of Christ in the former part of it: and thus they mutually confirm and illustrate each other.

II. As looking forward to the following epistles, which are an explication of the gospels, which open the mysteries of Christ's death and resurrection, the history of which we had in the gospels. This book introduces them and is a key to them, as the history of David is to David's psalms. We are members of the Christian church, that tabernacle of God among men, and it is our honour and privilege that we are so. Now this book gives us an account of the framing and rearing of that tabernacle. The four gospels showed us how the foundation of that house was laid; this shows us how the superstructure began to be raised,

1. Among the Jews and Samaritans, which we have an account of in the former part of this book.
2. Among the Gentiles, which we have an account of in the latter part: from thence, and downward to our own day, we find the Christian church subsisting in a visible profession of faith in Christ, as the Son of God and Saviour of the world, made by his baptized disciples, incorporated into religious societies, stately meeting in religious assemblies, attending on the apostles' doctrine, and joining in prayers and the breaking of bread, under the guidance and presidency of men that gave themselves to prayer and the ministry of the word, and in a spiritual communion with all in every place that do likewise. Such a body as this thee is now in the world, which we belong to: and, to our great satisfaction and honour, in this book we find the rise and origin of it, vastly different from the Jewish church, and erected upon its ruins; but undeniably appearing to be of God, and not of man. With what confidence and comfort may we proceed in, and adhere to, our Christian profession, as far as we find it agrees with this pattern in the mount, to which we ought religiously to conform and confine ourselves!

Two things more are to be observed concerning this book:--

- (1.) **The penman of it.** It was written by Luke, who wrote the third of the four gospels, which bears his name; and who (as the learned Dr. Whitby shows) was, very probably, one of the seventy disciples, whose commission (Luke 10:1, etc.) was little inferior to that of the twelve apostles. This Luke was very much a companion of Paul in his services and sufferings. Only Luke is with me, 2 Tim 4:11. We may know by his style in the latter part of this book when and where he was with him, for then he writes, We did so and so, as Acts 16:10; 20:6; and thenceforward to the end of the book. He was with Paul in his dangerous voyage to Rome, when he was carried thither a prisoner, was with him when from his prison there he wrote

his epistles to the Colossians and Philemon, in both which he is named. And it should seem that St. Luke wrote this history when he was with St. Paul at Rome, during his imprisonment there, and was assistant to him; for the history concludes with St. Paul's preaching there in his own hired house.

(2.) **The title of it:** The Acts of the Apostles; of the holy Apostles, so the Greek copies generally read it, and so they are called, Rev 18:20, Rejoice over her you holy apostles. One copy inscribes it, The Acts of the Apostles by Luke the Evangelist.

[1.] **It is the history of the apostles;** yet there is in it the history of Stephen, Barnabas, and some other apostolical men, who, though not of the twelve, were endued with the same Spirit, and employed in the same work; and, of those that were apostles, it is the history of Peter and Paul only that is here recorded (and Paul was now of the twelve), Peter the apostle of the circumcision, and Paul the apostles of the Gentiles, Gal 2:7. But this suffices as a specimen of what the rest did in other places, pursuant to their commission, for there were none of them idle; and as we are to think what is related in the gospels concerning Christ sufficient, because Infinite Wisdom thought so, the same we are to think here concerning what is related of the apostles and their labours; for what more is told us from tradition of the labours and sufferings of the apostles, and the churches they planted, is altogether doubtful and uncertain, and what I think we cannot build upon with any satisfaction at all. This is gold, silver, and precious stones, built upon the foundation: that is wood, hay, and stubble.

[2.] **It is called their acts, or doings;** Gesta apostolorum; so some. Praxeis(NT:4234) -- their practices of the lessons their Master had taught them. The apostles were active men; and though the wonders they did were by the word, yet they are fitly called their acts; they spoke, or rather the Spirit by them spoke, and it was done. The history is filled with their sermons and their sufferings; yet so much did they labour in their preaching, and so voluntarily did they expose themselves to sufferings, and such were their achievements by both, that they may very well be called their acts.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Romans

If we may compare scripture with scripture, and take the opinion of some devout and pious persons, in the Old Testament David's Psalms, and in the New Testament Paul's Epistles, are stars of the first magnitude, that differ from the other stars in glory. The whole scripture is indeed an epistle from heaven to earth: but in it we have upon record several particular epistles, more of Paul's than of any other, for he was the chief of the apostles, and laboured more abundantly than they all. His natural parts, I doubt not, were very pregnant; his apprehension was quick and piercing; his expressions were fluent and copious; his affections, wherever he took, very warm and zealous, and his resolutions no less bold and daring: this made him, before his conversion, a very keen and bitter persecutor; but when the strong man armed was dispossessed, and the stronger than he came to divide the spoil and to sanctify these qualifications, he became the most skilful zealous preacher; never any better fitted to win souls, nor more successful. Fourteen of his epistles we have in the canon of scripture; many more, it is probable, he wrote in the course of his ministry, which might be profitable enough for doctrine, for reproof, etc., but, not being given by inspiration of God, they were not received as canonical scripture, nor handed down to us. Six epistles, said to be Paul's, written to Seneca, and eight of Seneca's to him, are spoken of by some of the ancients [Sixt. Senens. Biblioth. Sanct. lib. 2] and are extant; but, upon the first view, they appear spurious and counterfeit.

This epistle to the Romans is placed first, not because of the priority of its date, but because of the superlative excellency of the epistle, it being one of the longest and fullest of all, and perhaps because of the dignity of the place to which it is written. Chrysostom would have this epistle read over to him twice a week. It is gathered from some passages in the epistle that it was written Anno Christi 56, from Corinth, while Paul made a short stay there in his way to Troas, Acts 20:5-6. He commendeth to the Romans Phebe, a servant of the church at Cenchrea (ch. 16), which was a place belonging to Corinth. He calls Gaius his host, or the man with whom he lodged Rom 16:23, and he was a Corinthian, not the same with Gaius of Derbe, mentioned Acts 20. Paul was now going up to Jerusalem, with the money that was given to the poor saints there; and of that he speaks, Rom 15:26. The great mysteries treated of in this epistle must needs produce in this, as in other writings of Paul, many things dark and hard to be understood, 2 Peter 3:16. The method of this (as of several other of the epistles) is observable; the former part of it doctrinal, in the first eleven chapters; the latter part practical, in the last five: to inform the judgment and to reform the life. And the best way to understand the truths explained in the former part is to abide and abound in the practice of the duties prescribed in the latter part; for, if any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine, John 7:17.

I. The doctrinal part of the epistles instructs us,

1. Concerning the way of salvation

(1.) The foundation of it laid in justification, and that not by the Gentiles' works of nature (ch. 1), nor by the Jews' works of the law (ch. 2, 3), for both Jews and Gentiles were liable to the curse; but only by faith in Jesus Christ, Rom 3:21, etc.; ch. 4.

- (2.) The steps of this salvation are,
[1.] Peace with God, ch. 5.
[2.] Sanctification, ch. 6, 7.
[3.] Glorification, ch. 8.

2. **Concerning the persons saved**, such as belong to the election of grace (ch. 9), Gentiles and Jews, ch. 10, 11. By this it appears that the subject he discourses of were such as were then the present truths, as the apostle speaks, 2 Peter 1:12. Two things the Jews then stumbled at-- justification by faith without the works of the law, and the admission of the Gentiles into the church; and therefore both these he studied to clear and vindicate.

II. The practical part follows, wherein we find,

1. Several general exhortations proper for all Christians, ch. 12.
2. Directions for our behaviour, as members of civil society, ch. 13.
3. Rules for the conduct of Christians to one another, as members of the Christian church, ch. 14 and Rom 15:1-14.

III. As he draws towards a conclusion, he makes an apology for writing to them Rom 15:14-16, gives them an account of himself and his own affairs (v. 17-21), promises them a visit (v. 22-29), begs their prayers (v. 30-33), sends particular salutations to many friends there Rom 16:1-16, warns them against those who caused divisions (v. 17-20), adds the salutations of his friends with him (v. 21-23), and ends with a benediction to them and a doxology to God (v. 24-27).

Matthew Henry's Commentary

1 Corinthians

Corinth was a principal city of Greece, in that particular division of it which was called Achaia. It was situated on the isthmus (or neck of land) that joined Peloponnesus to the rest of Greece, on the southern side, and had two ports adjoining, one at the bottom of the Corinthian Gulf, called Lechaem, not far from the city, whence they traded to Italy and the west, the other at the bottom of the Sinus Saronicus, called Cenchrea, at a more remote distance, whence they traded to Asia. From this situation, it is no wonder that Corinth should be a place of great trade and wealth; and, as affluence is apt to produce luxury of all kinds, neither is it to be wondered at if a place so famous for wealth and arts should be infamous for vice. It was in a particular manner noted for fornication, inasmuch that a Corinthian woman was a proverbial phrase for a strumpet, and *korinthiazein*, *korinthiasesthai*-- to play the Corinthian, is to play the whore, or indulge whorish inclinations. Yet in this lewd city did Paul, by the blessing of God on his labours, plant and raise a Christian church, chiefly among the Gentiles, as seems very probable from the history of this matter, Acts 18:1-18, compared with some passages in this epistle, particularly 12:2, where the apostle tells them, You know that you wee Gentiles, carried away to those dumb idols even as you were led, though it is not improbable that many Jewish converts might be also among them, for we are told that Crispus, the chief ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord, with all his house, Acts 18:8. He continued in this city nearly two years, as is plain from Acts 18:11 and 18 compared, and labored with great success, being encouraged by a divine vision assuring him God had much people in that city, Acts 18:9-10. Nor did he use to stay long in a place where his ministry met not with acceptance and success.

Some time after he left them he wrote this epistle to them, to water what he had planted and rectify some gross disorders which during his absence had been introduced, partly from the interest some false teacher or teachers had obtained amongst them, and partly from the leaven of their old maxims and manners, that had not been thoroughly purged out by the Christian principles they had entertained. And it is but too visible how much their wealth had helped to corrupt their manners, from the several faults for which the apostle reprehends them. Pride, avarice, luxury, lust (the natural offspring of a carnal and corrupt mind), are all fed and prompted by outward affluence. And with all these either the body of this people or some particular persons among them are here charged by the apostle. Their pride discovered itself in their parties and factions, and the notorious disorders they committed in the exercise of their spiritual gifts.

And this vice was not wholly fed by their wealth, but by the insight they had into the Greek learning and philosophy. Some of the ancients tell us that the city abounded with rhetoricians and philosophers. And these were men naturally vain, full of self-conceit, and apt to despise the plain doctrine of the gospel, because it did not feed the curiosity of an inquisitive and disputing temper, nor please the ear with artful speeches and a flow of fine words. Their avarice was manifest in their law-suits and litigations about meum-- mine, and tuum-- thine, before heathen judges. Their luxury appeared in more instances than one, in their dress, in their debauching themselves even at the Lord's table, when the rich, who were most faulty on this account, were guilty also of a very proud and criminal contempt of their poor brethren. Their lust broke out in a most flagrant and infamous instance, such as had not been named among the

Gentiles, not spoken of without detestation-- that a man should have his father's wife, either as his wife, or so as to commit fornication with her. This indeed seems to be the fault of a particular person; but the whole church were to blame that they had his crime in no greater abhorrence, that they could endure one of such very corrupt morals and of so flagitious a behaviour among them. But their participation in his sin was yet greater, if, as some of the ancients tell us, they were puffed up on behalf of the great learning and eloquence of this incestuous person. And it is plain from other passages of the epistle that they were not so entirely free from their former lewd inclinations as not to need very strict cautions and strong arguments against fornication: see 6:9-20. The pride of their learning had also carried many of them so far as to disbelieve or dispute against the doctrine of the resurrection. It is not improbable that they treated this question problematically, as they did many questions in philosophy, and tried their skill by arguing it pro and con.

It is manifest from this state of things that there was much that deserved reprehension, and needed correction, in this church. And the apostle, under the direction and influence of the Holy Spirit, sets himself to do both with all wisdom and faithfulness, and with a due mixture of tenderness and authority, as became one in so elevated and important a station in the church. After a short introduction at the beginning of the epistle, he first blames them for their discord and factions, enters into the origin and source of them, shows them how much pride and vanity, and the affectation of science, and learning, and eloquence, flattered by false teachers, contributed to the scandalous schism; and prescribes humility, and submission to divine instruction, the teaching of God by his Spirit, both by external revelation and internal illumination, as a remedy for the evils that abounded amongst them.

He shows them the vanity of their pretended science and eloquence on many accounts. This he does through the first four chapters. In the fifth he treats of the case of the incestuous person, and orders him to be put out from among them. Nor is what the ancients say improbable, that this incestuous person was a man in great esteem, and head of one party at least among them. The apostle seems to tax them with being puffed up on his account, 5:2. In the sixth chapter he blames them for their law-suits, carried on before heathen judges, when their disputes about property should have been amicably determined amongst themselves, and in the close of the chapter warns them against the sin of fornication, and urges his caution with a variety of arguments. In the seventh chapter he gives advice upon a case of conscience, which some of that church had proposed to him in an epistle, about marriage, and shows it to be appointed of God as a remedy against fornication, that the ties of it were not dissolved, though a husband or wife continued a heathen, when the other became a Christian; and, in short, that Christianity made no change in men's civil states and relations.

He gives also some directions here about virgins, in answer, as is probable, to the Corinthians' enquiries. In the eighth he directs them about meats offered to idols, and cautions them against abusing their Christian liberty. From this he also takes occasion, in the ninth chapter, to expatiate a little on his own conduct upon this head of liberty. For, though he might have insisted on a maintenance from the churches where he ministered, he waived this demand, that he might make the gospel of Christ without charge, and did in other things comply with and suit himself to the tempers and circumstances of those among whom he laboured, for their good. In the tenth chapter he dissuades them, from the example of the Jews, against having communion

with idolaters, by eating of their sacrifices, inasmuch as they could not be at once partakers of the Lord's table and the table of devils, though they were not bound to enquire concerning meat sold in the shambles, or set before them at a feast made by unbelievers, whether it were a part of the idol-sacrifices or no, but were at liberty to eat without asking questions.

In the eleventh chapter he gives direction about their habit in public worship, blames them for their gross irregularities and scandalous disorders in receiving the Lord's supper, and solemnly warns them against the abuse of so sacred an institution. In the twelfth chapter he enters on the consideration of spiritual gifts, which were poured forth in great abundance on this church, upon which they were not a little elated. He tells them, in this chapter, that all came from the same original, and were all directed to the same end. They issued from one Spirit, and were intended for the good of the church, and must be abused when they were not made to minister to this purpose. Towards the close he informs them that they were indeed valuable gifts, but he could recommend to them something far more excellent, upon which he breaks out, in the thirteenth chapter, into the commendation and characteristics of charity. And then, in the fourteenth, he directs them how to keep up decency and order in the churches in the use of their spiritual gifts, in which they seem to have been exceedingly irregular, through pride of their gifts and a vanity of showing them. The fifteenth chapter is taken up in confirming and explaining the great doctrine of the resurrection. The last chapter consists of some particular advices and salutations; and thus the epistle closes.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

2 Corinthians

In his former epistle the apostle had signified his intentions of coming to Corinth, as he passed through Macedonia (16:5), but, being providentially hindered for some time, he writes this second epistle to them about a year after the former; and there seem to be these two urgent occasions—

1. The case of the incestuous person, who lay under censure, required that with all speed he should be restored and received again into communion. This therefore he gives directions about (ch. 2), and afterwards (ch. 7) he declares the satisfaction he had upon the intelligence he received of their good behavior in that affair.
2. There was a contribution now making for the poor saints at Jerusalem, in which he exhorts the Corinthians to join (ch. 8, 9).

There are divers other things very observable in this epistle; for example,

- I. The account the apostle gives of his labours and success in preaching the gospel in several places, ch. 2.
- II. The comparison he makes between the Old and New Testament dispensation, ch. 3.
- III. The manifold sufferings that he and his fellow-labourers met with, and the motives and encouragements for their diligence and patience, ch. 4, 5.
- IV. The caution he gives the Corinthians against mingling with unbelievers, ch. 6.
- V. The way and manner in which he justifies himself and his apostleship from the opprobrious insinuations and accusations of false teachers, who endeavoured to ruin his reputation at Corinth, ch. 10-12, and throughout the whole epistle.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Galatians

This epistle of Paul is directed not to the church or churches of a single city, as some others are, but of a country or province, for so Galatia was. It is very probable that these Galatians were first converted to the Christian faith by his ministry; or, if he was not the instrument of planting, yet at least he had been employed in watering these churches, as is evident from this epistle itself, and also from Acts 18:23, where we find him going over all the country of Galatia and Phrygia in order, strengthening all the disciples. While he was with them, they had expressed the greatest esteem and affection both for his person and ministry; but he had not been long absent from them before some judaizing teachers got in among them, by whose arts and insinuations they were soon drawn into a meaner opinion both of the one and of the other. That which these false teachers chiefly aimed at was to draw them off from the truth as it is in Jesus, particularly in the great doctrine of justification, which they grossly perverted, by asserting the necessity of joining the observance of the law of Moses with faith in Christ in order to it: and, the better to accomplish this their design, they did all they could to lessen the character and reputation of the apostle, and to raise up their own on the ruins of his, representing him as one who, if he was to be owned as an apostle, yet was much inferior to others, and particularly who deserved not such a regard as Peter, James, and John, whose followers, it is likely, they pretended to be: and in both these attempts they had but too great success.

This was the occasion of his writing this epistle, wherein he expresses his great concern that they had suffered themselves to be so soon turned aside from the faith of the gospel, vindicates his own character and authority as an apostle against the aspersions of his enemies, showing that his mission and doctrine were both divine, and that he was not, upon any account, behind the very chief of the apostles, 2 Cor 11:5. He then sets himself to assert and maintain the great gospel doctrine of justification by faith without the works of the law, and to obviate some difficulties that might be apt to arise in their minds concerning it: and, having established this important doctrine, he exhorts them to stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free, cautions them against the abuse of this liberty, gives them several very needful counsels and directions and then concludes the epistle by giving them a just description of those false teachers by whom they had been ensnared, and, on the contrary, of his own temper and behavior. In all this his great scope and design were to recover those who had been perverted, to settle those who might be wavering, and to confirm such among them as had kept their integrity.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Ephesians

Some think that this epistle to the Ephesians was a circular letter sent to several churches, and that the copy directed to the Ephesians happened to be taken into the canon, and so it came to bear that particular inscription. And they have been induced the rather to think this because it is the only one of all Paul's epistles that has nothing in it peculiarly adapted to the state or case of that particular church; but it has much of common concernment to all Christians, and especially to all who, having been Gentiles in times past, were converted to Christianity. But then it may be observed, on the other hand, that the epistle is expressly inscribed (1:1) to the saints which are at Ephesus; and in the close of it he tells them that he had sent Tychicus unto them, whom, in 2 Tim 4:12, he says he had sent to Ephesus. It is an epistle that bears date out of a prison: and some have observed that what this apostle wrote when he was a prisoner had the greatest relish and savour in it of the things of God. When his tribulations did abound, his consolations and experiences did much more abound, whence we may observe that the afflictive exercises of God's people, and particularly of his ministers, often tend to the advantage of others as well as to their own. The apostle's design is to settle and establish the Ephesians in the truth, and further to acquaint them with the mystery of the gospel, in order to it. In the former part he represents the great privilege of the Ephesians, who, having been in time past idolatrous heathens, were now converted to Christianity and received into covenant with God, which he illustrates from a view of their deplorable state before their conversion, ch. 1-3. In the latter part (which we have in the 4th, 5th, and 6th chapters) he instructs them in the principal duties of religion, both personal and relative, and exhorts and quickens them to the faithful discharge of them. Zanchy observes that we have here an epitome of the whole Christian doctrine, and of almost all the chief heads of divinity.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Philippians

Philippi was a chief city of the western part of Macedonia, *protes meridos tes Makedonias polis*, Acts 16:12. It took its name from Philip, the famous king of Macedon, who repaired and beautified it, and it was afterwards made a Roman colony. Near this place were the *Campi Philippici*, remarkable for the famous battles between Julius Caesar and Pompey the Great, and that between Augustus and Antony on one side and Cassius and Brutus on the other. But it is most remarkable among Christians for this epistle, which was written when Paul was a prisoner at Rome, AD 62. Paul seems to have had a very particular kindness for the church at Philippi, which he himself had been instrumental in planting; and, though he had the care of all the churches, he had, upon that account, a particular fatherly tender care of this. To those to whom God has employed us to do any good we should look upon ourselves both as encouraged and engaged to study to do more good. He looked upon them as his children, and, having begotten them by the gospel, he was desirous by the same gospel to nourish and nurse them up.

- I. He was called in an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel at Philippi, Acts 16:9. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. He saw God going before him, and was encouraged to use all means for carrying on the good work which was begun among them, and building upon the foundation which was laid.
- II. At Philippi he suffered hard things; he was scourged, and put into the stocks Acts 16:23-24; yet he had not the less kindness for the place for the hard usage he met with there. We must never love our friends the less for the ill treatment which our enemies give us.
- III. The beginnings of that church were very small; Lydia was converted there, and the jailer, and a few more: yet that did not discourage him. If good be not done at first, it may be done afterwards, and the last works may be more abundant. We must not be discouraged by small beginnings.
- IV. It seems, by many passages in this epistle, that this church at Philippi grew into a flourishing church, and particularly that the brethren were very kind to Paul. He had reaped of their temporal things, and he made a return in spiritual things. He acknowledges the receipt of a present they had sent him (4:18), and this when no other church communicated with him as concerning giving and receiving (v. 15); and he gives them a prophet's, an apostle's reward, in this epistle, which is of more value than thousands of gold and silver.

Colossians

Colosse was a considerable city of Phrygia, and probably not far from Laodicea and Hierapolis; we find these mentioned together, 4:13. It is now buried in ruins, and the memory of it chiefly preserved in this epistle. The design of the epistle is to warn them of the danger of the Jewish zealots, who pressed the necessity of observing the ceremonial law; and to fortify them against the mixture of the Gentile philosophy with their Christian principles. He professes a great satisfaction in their stedfastness and constancy, and encourages them to perseverance. It was written about the same time with the epistles to the Ephesians and Philippians, AD 62, and in the same place, while he was now a prisoner at Rome. He was not idle in his confinement, and the word of God was not bound.

This epistle, like that to the Romans, was written to those he had never seen, nor had any personal acquaintance with. The church planted at Colosse was not by Paul's ministry, but by the ministry of Epaphras or Epaphroditus, an evangelist, one whom he delegated to preach the gospel among the Gentiles; and yet,

- I. There was a flourishing church at Colosse, and one which was eminent and famous among the churches. One would have thought none would have come to be flourishing churches but those which Paul himself had planted; but here was a flourishing church planted by Epaphras. God is sometimes pleased to make use of the ministry of those who are of less note, and lower gifts, for doing great service to his church. God uses what hands he pleases, and is not tied to those of note, that the excellence of the power may appear to be of God and not of men, 2 Cor 4:7.

- II. Though Paul had not the planting of this church, yet he did not therefore neglect it; nor, in writing his epistles, does he make any difference between that and other churches. The Colossians, who were converted by the ministry of Epaphras, were as dear to him, and he was as much concerned for their welfare, as the Philippians, or any others who were converted by his ministry. Thus he put an honour upon an inferior minister, and teaches us not to be selfish, nor think all that honour lost which goes beside ourselves. We learn, in his example, not to think it a disparagement to us to water what others have planted, or build upon the foundation which others have laid: as he himself, as a wise master-builder, laid the foundation, and another built thereon, 1 Cor 3:10.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

1 Thessalonians

Thessalonica was formerly the metropolis of Macedonia; it is now called Salonichi, and is the best peopled, and one of the best towns for commerce, in the Levant. The apostle Paul, being diverted from his design of going into the provinces of Asia, properly so called, and directed after an extraordinary manner to preach the gospel in Macedonia Acts 16:9-10, in obedience to the call of God went from Troas to Samothracia, thence to Neapolis, and thence to Philippi, where he had good success in his ministry, but met with hard usage, being cast into prison with Silas his companion in travel and labour, from which being wonderfully delivered, they comforted the brethren there, and departed. Passing through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where the apostle planted a church that consisted of some believing Jews and many converted Gentiles, Acts 17:1-4.

But a tumult being raised in the city by the unbelieving Jews, and the lewd and baser sort of the inhabitants, Paul and Silas, for their safety, were sent away by night unto Berea, and afterwards Paul was conducted to Athens, leaving Silas and Timotheus behind him, but sent directions that they should come to him with all speed. When they came, Timotheus was sent to Thessalonica, to inquire after their welfare and to establish them in the faith 1 Thess 3:2, and, returning to Paul while he tarried at Athens, was sent again, together with Silas, to visit the churches in Macedonia.

So that Paul, being left at Athens alone 1 Thess 3:1, departed thence to Corinth, where he continued a year and a half, in which time Silas and Timotheus returned to him from Macedonia Acts 18:5, and then he wrote this epistle to the church of Christ at Thessalonica, which, though it is placed after the other epistles of this apostle, is supposed to be first in time of all Paul's epistles, and to be written about A.D. 51. The main scope of it is to express the thankfulness of this apostle for the good success his preaching had among them, to establish them in the faith, and persuade them to a holy conversation.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

2 Thessalonians

This Second Epistle was written soon after the former, and seems to have been designed to prevent a mistake, which might arise from some passages in the former epistle, concerning the second coming of Christ, as if it were near at hand. The apostle in this epistle is careful to prevent any wrong use which some among them might make of those expressions of his that were agreeable to the dialect of the prophets of the Old Testament, and informs them that there were many intermediate counsels yet to be fulfilled before that day of the Lord should come, though, because it is sure, he had spoken of it as near. There are other things that he writes about for their consolation under sufferings, and exhortation and direction in duty.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

1 Timothy

Hitherto Paul's epistles were directed to churches; now follow some to particular persons: two to Timothy, one to Titus, and another to Philemon-- all three ministers. Timothy and Titus were evangelists, an inferior order to the apostles, as appears by Eph 4:11, Some prophets, some apostles, some evangelists. Their commission and work was much the same with that of the apostles, to plant churches, and water the churches that were planted; and accordingly they were itinerants, as we find Timothy was. Timothy was first converted by Paul, and therefore he calls him his own son in the faith: we read of his conversion, Acts 16:3.

The scope of these two epistles is to direct Timothy how to discharge his duty as an evangelist at Ephesus, where he now was, and where Paul ordered him for some time to reside, to perfect the good work which he had begun there. As for the ordinary pastoral charge of that church, he had very solemnly committed it to the presbytery, as appears from Acts 20:28, where he charges the presbyters to feed the flock of God, which he had purchased with his own blood.

2 Timothy

This second epistle Paul wrote to Timothy from Rome, when he was a prisoner there and in danger of his life; this is evident from these words, I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand, 2 Tim 4:6. It appears that his removal out of this world, in his own apprehension, was not far off, especially considering the rage and malice of his persecutors; and that he had been brought before the emperor Nero, which he calls his first answer, when no man stood with him, but all men forsook him, 2 Tim 4:16. And interpreters agree that this was the last epistle he wrote. Where Timothy now was is not certain. The scope of this epistle somewhat differs from that of the former, not so much relating to his office as an evangelist as to his personal conduct and behavior.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Titus

This Epistle of Paul to Titus is much of the same nature with those to Timothy; both were converts of Paul, and his companions in labours and sufferings; both were in the office of evangelists, whose work was to water the churches planted by the apostles, and to set in order the things that were wanting in them: they were vice-apostles, as it were, working the work of the Lord, as they did, and mostly under their direction, though not despotic and arbitrary, but with the concurring exercise of their own prudence and judgment, 1 Cor 16:10,12. We read much of this Titus, his titles, character, and active usefulness, in many places-- he was a Greek, Gal 2:3. Paul called him his son Titus 1:4, his brother 2 Cor 2:13, his partner and fellow-helper 2 Cor 8:23, one that walked in the same spirit and in the same steps with himself. He went up with the apostles to the church at Jerusalem Gal 2:1, was much conversant at Corinth, for which church he had an earnest care, 2 Cor 8:16.

Paul's second epistle to them, and probably his first also, was sent by his hand, 2 Cor 8:16-18,23; 9:2-4; 12:18. He was with the apostle at Rome, and thence went into Dalmatia 2 Tim 4:10, after which no more occurs of him in the scriptures. So that by them he appears not to have been a fixed bishop; if such he were, and in those times, the church of Corinth, where he most laboured, had the best title to him. In Crete (now called Candia, formerly Hecatompolis, from the hundred cities that were in it), a large island at the mouth of the Aegean Sea, the gospel had got some footing; and here were Paul and Titus in one of their travels, cultivating this plantation; but the apostle of the Gentiles, having on him the care of all the churches, could not himself tarry long at this place. He therefore left Titus some time there, to carry on the work which had been begun, wherein, probably, meeting with more difficulty than ordinary, Paul wrote this epistle to him; and yet perhaps not so much for his own sake as for the people's, that the endeavours of Titus, strengthened with apostolic advice and authority, might be more significant and effectual among them. He was to see all the cities furnished with good pastors, to reject and keep out the unmeet and unworthy, to teach sound doctrine, and instruct all sorts in their duties, to set forth the free grace of God in man's salvation by Christ, and withal to show the necessity of maintaining good works by those who have believed in God and hope for eternal life from him.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Philemon

This epistle to Philemon is placed the last of those with the name of Paul to them, perhaps because the shortest, and of an argument peculiar and different from all the others; yet such as the Spirit of God, who indited it, saw would, in its kind, be very instructive and useful in the churches. The occasion of it was this:-- Philemon, one of note and probably a minister in the church of Colosse, a city of Phrygia, had a servant named Onesimus, who, having purloined his goods, ran away from him, and in his rambles came to Rome, where Paul was then a prisoner for the gospel, and, providentially coming under his preaching there, was, by the blessing of God, converted by him, after which he ministered awhile to the apostle in bonds, and might have been further useful to him, but, understanding him to be another man's servant, Paul would not, without his consent, detain him, but sends him back with this letter-commendatory, wherein he earnestly sues for his pardon and kind reception.

Before we enter on the exposition, such general things as follow may be taken notice of from the epistle and what relates to it; namely,

- I. The goodness and mercy of God to a poor wandering sinner, bringing him by his gracious providence under the means, and making them effectual to his conversion. Thus came he to be sought of him that asked not for him, and to be found of him that sought him not, Isa 65:1.
- II. The great and endeared affection between a true convert and him whom God used to be the instrument of his conversion. Paul regards this poor fugitive now as his son in the faith, and terms him his own bowels; and Onesimus readily serves Paul in prison, and would gladly have continued to do so, would duty have permitted; but, being another's servant, he must return and submit himself to his master, and be at his disposal.
- III. The tender and good spirit of this blessed apostle Paul. With what earnestness does he concern himself for the poor slave! Being now, through his preaching, reconciled to God, he labours for reconciliation between him and his master. How pathetic a letter does he here write in his behalf! Scarcely any argument is forgotten that could possibly be used in the case; and all are pressed with such force that, had it been the greatest favour to himself that he was asking, he could not have used more.
- IV. The remarkable providence of God in preserving such a short writing as this, that might be thought of little concern to the church, being not only a letter to a particular person (as those to Timothy, and Titus, and Gaius, and the elect lady, likewise were), but of a private personal matter, namely, the receiving of a poor fugitive servant into the favour and family of his injured master. What in this is there that concerns the common salvation? And yet over this has there been a special divine care, it being given (as the other scriptures were) by inspiration of

God, and in some sort, as they are, profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, and for instruction in righteousness. God would have extant a proof and instance of his rich and free grace for the encouragement and comfort of the meanest and vilest of sinners, looking to him for mercy and forgiveness; and for instruction to ministers and others not to despise any, much less to judge them as to their final state, as if they were utter cast-aways, but rather to attempt their conversion, hoping they may be saved; likewise how to behave towards them. Joy must be on earth, as well as there is in heaven, over one sinner who repenteth. Such must now be loved, and helped, and confirmed in good, and furthered in it; and, in their outward concerns, their comfort and welfare must be consulted and promoted as much as possible. And, on their part, they must be humble and grateful, acknowledging God and his instruments in what good they have received, ready to all suitable returns, making what reparation they can in case of injuries, and living a life of thankfulness and obedience. To such purposes may this epistle have been written and preserved. And perhaps,

- V. There may be something further in all this; at least, by way of allusion, it is applicable to the mediation and intercession of Christ for poor sinners. We, like Onesimus, were revolters from God's service, and had injured him in his rights. Jesus Christ finds us, and by his grace works a change in us, and then intercedes for us with the Father, that we may be received into his favour and family again, and past offences may be forgiven; and we are sure that the Father heareth him always. There is no reason to doubt but Paul prevailed with Philemon to forgive and receive Onesimus: and more reason have we to be confident that the intercession of Christ with the Father is prevalent for the acceptance of all whose case he takes in hand and recommends to him. From these general observations we come to the epistle itself.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Hebrews

Concerning this epistle we must inquire,

- I. **Into the divine authority of it;** for this has been questioned by some, whose distempered eyes could not bear the light of it, or whose errors have been confuted by it; such as the Arians, who deny the Godhead and self-existence of Christ; and the Socinians, who deny his satisfaction; but, after all the attempts of such men to disparage this epistle, the divine original of it shines forth with such strong and unclouded rays that he who runs may read it is an eminent part of the canon of scripture. The divinity of the matter, the sublimity of the style, the excellency of the design, the harmony of this with other parts of scripture, and its general reception in the church of God in all ages-- these are the evidences of its divine authority.

- II. **As to the divine amanuensis or penman of this epistle,** we are not so certain; it does not bear the name of any in the front of it, as the rest of the epistles do, and there has been some dispute among the learned to whom they should ascribe it. Some have assigned it to Clemens of Rome; other to Luke; and many to Barnabas, thinking that the style and manner of expression is very agreeable to the zealous, authoritative, affectionate temper that Barnabas appears to be of, in the account we have of him in the acts of the Apostles; and one ancient father quotes an expression out of this epistle as the words of Barnabas. But it is generally assigned to the apostle Paul; and some later copies and translations have put Paul's name in the title. In the primitive times it was generally ascribed to him, and the style and scope of it very well agree with his spirit, who was a person of a clear head and a warm heart, whose main end and endeavour it was to exalt Christ. Some think that the apostle Peter refers to this epistle, and proves Paul to be the penman of it, by telling the Hebrews, to whom he wrote, of Paul's having written to them, 2 Peter 3:15. We read of no other epistle that he ever wrote to them but this. And though it has been objected that, since Paul put his name to all his other epistles, he would not have omitted it here; yet others have well answered that he, being the apostle of the Gentiles, who were odious to the Jews, might think fit to conceal his name, lest their prejudices against him might hinder them from reading and weighing it as they ought to do.

- III. **As to the scope and design of this epistle,** it is very evident that it was clearly to inform the minds, and strongly to confirm the judgment, of the Hebrews in the transcendent excellency of the gospel above the law, and so to take them off from the ceremonies of the law, to which they were so wedded, of which they were so fond, that they even doted on them, and those of them who were Christians retained too much of the old leaven, and needed to be purged from it. The design of this epistle was to persuade and press the believing Hebrews to a constant adherence to the Christian faith, and perseverance in it, notwithstanding all the sufferings they might meet with in so doing. In order to this, the apostle speaks much of the excellency of the author of the gospel, the glorious Jesus, whose honour he advances, and whom he justly prefers before all others, showing him to be all in all, and this in lofty strains of holy rhetoric. It must be acknowledged that there are many things in this epistle hard to be understood, but the sweetness we shall find

therein will make us abundant amends for all the pains we take to understand it. And indeed, if we compare all the epistles of the New Testament, we shall not find any of them more replenished with divine, heavenly matter than this to the Hebrews.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

James

The writer of this epistle was not James the son of Zebedee; for he was put to death by Herod (Acts 12) before Christianity had gained so much ground among the Jews of the dispersion as is here implied. But it was the other James, the son of Alpheus, who was cousin-german to Christ, and one of the twelve apostles, Matt 10:3. He is called a pillar Gal 2:9, and this epistle of his cannot be disputed, without loosening a foundation-stone. It is called a general epistle, because (as some think) not directed to any particular person or church, but such a one as we call a circular letter. Others think it is called general, or catholic, to distinguish it from the epistles of Ignatius, Barnabas, Polycarp, and others who were noted in the primitive times, but not generally received in the church, and on that account not canonical, as this is. Eusebius tells us that this epistle was "generally read in the churches with the other catholic epistles." His. Eccles. Page 53. Ed. Val. Anno 1678. James, our author, was called the just, for his great piety. He was an eminent example of those graces which he presses upon others. He was so exceedingly revered for his justice, temperance, and devotion, that Josephus the Jewish historian records it as one of the causes of the destruction of Jerusalem, "That St. James was martyred in it." This is mentioned in hopes of procuring the greater regard to what is penned by so holy and excellent a man. The time when this epistle was written is uncertain. The design of it is to reprove Christians for their great degeneracy both in faith and manners, and to prevent the spreading of those libertine doctrines which threatened the destruction of all practical godliness. It was also a special intention of the author of this epistle to awaken the Jewish nation to a sense of the greatness and nearness of those judgments which were coming upon them; and to support all true Christians in the way of their duty, under the calamities and persecutions they might meet with. The truths laid down are very momentous, and necessary to be maintained; and the rules for practice, as here stated, are such as ought to be observed in our times as well as in preceding ages.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

1 Peter

Two epistles we have enrolled in the sacred canon of the scripture written by Peter, who was a most eminent apostle of Jesus Christ, and whose character shines brightly as it is described in the four Gospels and in the Acts of the Apostles, but, as it is painted by the papists and legendary writers, it represents a person of extravagant pride and ambition. It is certain from scripture that Simon Peter was one of the first of those whom our Lord called to be his disciples and followers, that he was a person of excellent endowments, both natural and gracious, of great parts and ready elocution, quick to apprehend and bold to execute whatever he knew to be his duty. When our Saviour called his apostles, and gave them their commission, he nominated him first in the list; and by his behaviour towards him he seems to have distinguished him as a special favourite among the twelve. Many instances of our Lord's affection to him, both during his life and after his resurrection, are upon record.

But there are many things confidently affirmed of this holy man that are directly false: as, That he had a primacy and superior power over the rest of the apostles-- that he was more than their equal-- that he was their prince, monarch, and sovereign-- and that he exercised a jurisdiction over the whole college of the apostles: moreover, That he as the sole and universal pastor over all the Christian world, the only vicar of Christ upon earth-- that he was for above twenty years bishop of Rome-- that the popes of Rome succeed to St. Peter, and derive from him a universal supremacy and jurisdiction over all churches and Christians upon earth-- and that all this was by our Lord's ordering and appointment; whereas Christ never gave him any pre-eminence of this kind, but positively forbade it, and gave precepts to the contrary. The other apostles never consented to any such claim. Paul declares himself not a whit behind the very chief apostles, 2 Cor 11:5 and 12:11. Here is no exception of Peter's superior dignity, whom Paul took the freedom to blame, and withstood him to the face, Gal 2:11. And Peter himself never assumed any thing like it, but modestly styles himself an apostle of Jesus Christ; and, when he writes to the presbyters of the church, he humbly places himself in the same rank with them: The elders who are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, 5:1. See Dr. Barrow on the pope's supremacy.

The design of this first epistle is,

- I. **To explain more fully the doctrines of Christianity to these newly-converted Jews.**
- II. **To direct and persuade them to a holy conversation,** in the faithful discharge of all personal and relative duties, whereby they would secure their own peace and effectually confute the slanders and reproaches of their enemies.
- III. **To prepare them for sufferings.** This seems to be his principal intention; for he has something to this purport in every chapter, and does, by a great variety of arguments, encourage them to patience and perseverance in the faith, lest the persecutions and sad calamities that were coming upon them should prevail with them to apostatize from Christ and the gospel. It is remarkable that you find not so much as one word savouring of the spirit and pride of a pope in either of these epistles.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

2 Peter

The penman of this epistle appears plainly to be the same who wrote the foregoing; and, whatever difference some learned men apprehend they discern in the style of this epistle from that of the former, this cannot be a sufficient argument to assert that it was written by Simon who succeeded the apostle James in the church at Jerusalem, inasmuch as he who wrote this epistle calls himself Simon Peter, and an apostle (v. 1), and says that he was one of the three apostles that were present at Christ's transfiguration (v. 18), and says expressly that he had written a former epistle to them, 3:1. The design of this second epistle is the same with that of the former, as is evident from the first verse of the third chapter, whence observe that, in the things of God, we have need of precept upon precept, and line upon line, and all little enough to keep them in remembrance; and yet these are the things which should be most faithfully recorded and frequently remembered by us.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

1 John

Though the continued tradition of the church attests that this epistle came from John the apostle, yet we may observe some other evidence that will confirm (or with some perhaps even outweigh) the certainty of that tradition. It should seem that the penman was one of the apostolical college by the sensible palpable assurance he had of the truth of the Mediator's person in his human nature: That which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life, v. 1. Here he takes notice of the evidence the Lord gave to Thomas of his resurrection, by calling him to feel the prints of the nails and of the spear, which is recorded by John. And he must have been one of the disciples present when the Lord came on the same day in which he arose from the dead, and showed them his hands and his side, John 20:20. But, that we may be assured which apostle this was, there is scarcely a critic or competent judge of diction, or style of argument and spirit, but will adjudge this epistle to the writer of that gospel that bears the name of the apostle John.

They wonderfully agree in the titles and characters of the Redeemer: The Word, the Life, the Light; his name was the Word of God. Compare 1:1 and 5:7 with John 1:1 and Rev 19:13. They agree in the commendation of God's love to us (3:9; 4:7; and 5:1; John 3:5-6. Lastly (to add no more instances, which may be easily seen in comparing this epistle with that gospel), they agree in the allusion to, or application of, that passage in that gospel which relates (and which alone relates) the issuing of water and blood out of the Redeemer's opened side: This is he that came by water and blood, 5:6. Thus the epistle plainly appears to flow from the same pen as that gospel did. Now I know not that the text, or the intrinsic history of any of the gospels, gives us such assurance of its writer or penman as that ascribed to John plainly does. There (viz. 21:24) the sacred historian thus notifies himself: This is the disciple that testifieth of these things and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. Now who is this disciple, but he concerning whom Peter asked, What shall this man do? And concerning whom the Lord answered, If I will that he tarry till I come, what is that to thee? (v. 22). And who (v. 20) is described by these three characters:--

1. That he is the disciple whom Jesus loved, the Lord's peculiar friend.
2. That he also leaned on his breast at supper.
3. That he said unto him, Lord, who is he that betrayeth thee?

As sure then as it is that that disciple was John, so sure may the church be that that gospel and this epistle came from the beloved John. The epistle is styled general, as being not inscribed to any particular church; it is, as a circular letter (or visitation charge), sent to divers churches (some say of Parthia), in order to confirm them in their steadfast adherence to the Lord Christ, and the sacred doctrines concerning his person and office, against seducers; and to instigate them to adorn that doctrine by love to God and man, and particularly to each other, as being descended from God, united by the same head, and travelling towards the same eternal life.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

2 John

Here we find a canonical epistle inscribed, principally, not only to a single person, but to one also of the softer sex. And why not to one of that sex? In gospel redemption, privilege, and dignity, there is neither male nor female; they are both one in Christ Jesus. Our Lord himself neglected his own repast, to commune with the woman of Samaria, in order to show her the fountain of life; and, when almost expiring upon the cross, he would with his dying lips bequeath his blessed mother to the care of his beloved disciple, and thereby instruct him to respect female disciples for the future. It was to one of the same sex that our Lord chose to appear first after his return from the grave, and to send by her the news of his resurrection to this as well as to the other apostles; and we find afterwards a zealous Priscilla so well acquitting herself in her Christian race, and particularly in some hazardous service towards the apostle Paul, that she is not only often mentioned before her husband, but to her as well as to him, not only the apostle himself, but also all the Gentile churches, were ready to return their thankful acknowledgments. No wonder then that a heroine in the Christian religion, honored by divine providence, and distinguished by divine grace, should be dignified also by an apostolical epistle.

3 John

Christian communion is exerted and cherished by letter. Christians are to be commended in the practical proof of their professed subjection to the gospel of Christ. The animating and countenancing of generous and public-spirited persons is doing good to many-- to this end the apostle sends this encouraging epistle to his friend Gaius, in which also he complains of the quite opposite spirit and practice of a certain minister, and confirms the good report concerning another more worthy to be imitated.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Jude

This epistle is styled (as are some few others) general or Catholic, because it is not immediately directed to any particular person, family, or church, but to the whole society of Christians of that time, lately converted to the faith of Christ, whether from Judaism or paganism: and it is, and will be, of standing, lasting, and special use in and to the church as long as Christianity, that is, as time, shall last. The general scope of it is much the same with that of the second chapter of the second epistle of Peter, which having been already explained, the less will need to be said on this. It is designed to warn us against seducers and their seduction, to inspire us with a warm love to, and a hearty concern for, truth (evident and important truth), and that in the closest conjunction with holiness, of which charity, or sincere unbiased brotherly-love, is a most essential character and inseparable branch.

The truth we are to hold fast, and endeavor that others may be acquainted with and not depart from, has two special characters:-- It is the truth as it is in Jesus (Eph 4:21; and it is truth after (or which is according to) godliness, Titus 1:1. The gospel is the gospel of Christ. He has revealed it to us, and he is the main subject of it; and therefore we are indispensably bound to learn thence all we can of his person, natures, and offices: indifference as to this is inexcusable in any who call themselves Christians; and we know from what fountain we are wholly and solely to draw all necessary saving knowledge. Further, it is also a doctrine of godliness. Whatever doctrines favor the corrupt lusts of men cannot be of God, let the pleas and pretensions for them be what they will. Errors dangerous to the souls of men soon sprang up in the church. The servants slept and tares were sown. But such were the wisdom and kindness of Providence that they began sensibly to appear and show themselves, while some, at least, of the apostles were yet alive to confute them, and warn others against them. We are apt to think, If we had lived in their times, we should have been abundantly fenced against the attempts and artifices of seducers; but we have their testimony and their cautions, which is sufficient; and, if we will not believe their writings, neither should we have believed or regarded their sayings, if we had lived among them and conversed personally with them.

Matthew Henry's Commentary

Revelation

It ought to be no prejudice to the credit and authority of this book that it has been rejected by men of corrupt minds, such as Cerdon and Marcion, and doubted of by men of a better character; for this has been the lot of other parts of holy writ, and of the divine Author of the scripture himself. The image and superscription of this book are truly sacred and divine, and the matter of it agreeable with other prophetic books, particularly Ezekiel and Daniel; the church of God has generally received it, and found good counsel and great comfort in it. From the beginning, the church of God has been blessed with prophecy. That glorious prediction of breaking the serpent's head was the stay and support of the patriarchal age; and the many prophecies there were concerning the Messiah to come were the gospel of the Old Testament. Christ himself prophesied of the destruction of Jerusalem; and, about the time in which that was accomplished, he entrusted the apostle John with this book of revelation, to deliver it to the church as a prediction of the most important events that should happen to it to the end of time, for the support of the faith of his people and the direction of their hope. It is called the Revelation, because God therein discovers those things which could never have been sifted out by the reasonings of human understanding, those deep things of God which no man knows, but the Spirit of God, and those to whom he reveals them.